

Earth as Art

The images captured by French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand in the *Earth from Above* series amaze, intrigue, and in some cases, shame viewers as we evaluate the state of the planet at the dawn of the millennium.

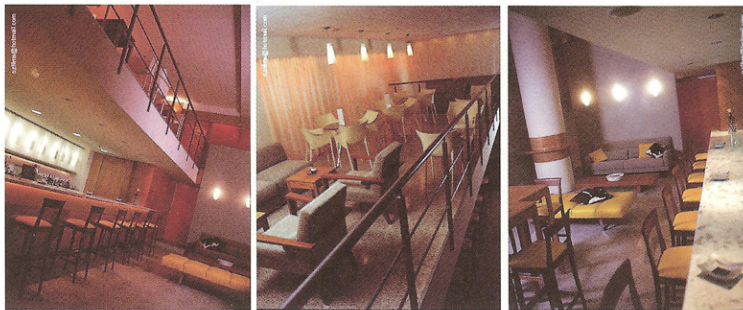
The ambitious aerial-photography project required nearly 3,000 hours of helicopter flight time, and after spending the past 11 years visiting 85 countries, Arthus-Bertrand says he has learned that “man is very, very little on this Earth. Flying over the globe, one soon realizes we don’t account for much. We’re part of the landscape, even if, nowadays, we have the ability to imprint our mark upon it.”

Arthus-Bertrand considers himself a witness photographer and tries to represent our planet in a simple and genuine manner. “No cheating in order to show things as they are,” he says. And that’s what makes his pictures all the more spectacular – the vivid colors and striking scenes seem unreal, or doctored in some way, but they’re not.

Thorough descriptions accompany each picture, and often the shot takes on special meaning with added background information. One such example is a photo of Pripjat, Ukraine. A cursory glance and it seems like a snow-covered city in an anonymous country – until you read that Pripjat remains utterly abandoned in the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Apart from enjoying Arthus-Bertrand’s work for its aesthetic value, the photographer hopes everyone who sees it will reflect on the damage man has caused the environment and think of ways each of us can contribute to correcting some of our mistakes for the salvation of future generations.

More than six million people worldwide have seen the *Earth from Above* photos, and organizers try to present the show outdoors or in spacious venues free to the public. This exhibition forms a part of the *France-Venezuela 2002* cultural festival sponsored by the French Embassy and will be at the Centro de Arte La Estancia until April 7.



Cocktail Capers

The postwar lounge boom characterized by hi-fi stereos, umbrella-clad cocktails, and kitschy '50s and '60s easy listening wasn't even considered hip in its heyday. No matter, because a younger generation has tweaked the leisure concept for the new millennium into something zero-camp, super-sophisticated and deeply groovy.

At the Living Room Lounge in C.C. San Ignacio, habitués can relax in style while sampling top-notch libations from a stellar cocktail menu that will quench any yearning, but beware: traditionalists who can't live without their 12-year-old whisky are not the prime target here. Instead, go for something seldom seen in Caracas watering holes – Manhattans, Black Russians, Cosmopolitans, Kamakazis, Long Island Ice Teas, California Lemonades, Mojitos, or New York Sours, accompanied by an ever-expanding selection of carpaccios, mousses, patés, gourmet sandwiches and salads.

As is de rigueur in the local bar scene, Living Room Lounge features a rotation of select DJs spinning electronic grooves but at a decibel level compatible with conversation. Live performances, audio-visual displays, and theme nights round out the entertainment.

The decor created by architect Lea Dojc of Equipo 18 is über-elegant and features diffused tangerine lighting, honey-colored woods, stainless steel accents, low-slung club chairs and sofas, diaphanous white curtains, and a generous marble-topped bar. Living Room's three partners – Daniel Sensel, Carlos Belozercovsky and Isaac Peckel – scoured hip lounges in New York and Miami to pick up ideas and improve upon them for Caracas clientele. According to Peckel, the owners want to cater to a posh crowd of executives and the like, and may make some small changes in the future to lure in this finicky set.

Living Room Lounge is a pioneer of the leisure-type nightclub model making a blazing comeback from New York to Tokyo, so relax, loosen that necktie and raise a martini to what is surely one of the hippest new bars in the city.

